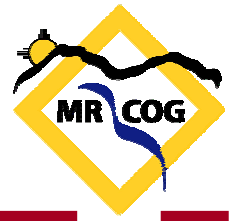
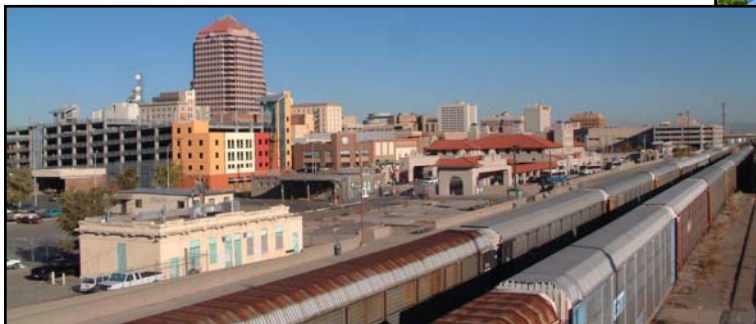

Mid-Region Council of Governments



2005 Annual Report



Communities Working Together

A letter from the MRCOG Board Chair

Looking back at my first year as Chairman of the MRCOG Board of Directors, I can say that it's been an incredible experience!

It is gratifying to see that the COG is recognized both for its capacity to bring together local governments to resolve issues, and for its ability to undertake and excel at managing complex projects such as WIA and the commuter rail. MRCOG has continued to maintain its high standards during the past three years for quality work and is recognized within our communities and around the state as the place to go for creative and capable guidance on complex issues.

I look to the coming year as an opportunity to continue using a regional perspective when addressing key issues such as water resource management, air quality, job creation, and workforce development. In the long run, the measure of our success is the quality of life in the region and the welfare of the people who live here, and MRCOG helps us look beyond our individual boundaries to better serve the needs of all our residents.

I want to thank my colleagues on the Board of Directors for their continued hard work and vision. The successes of this organization would not have been possible without the contributions of our member governments and other public and private partners within the state. I am grateful for your support and participation and look forward to another exciting year ahead!

M. Steven Anaya



M. Steven Anaya

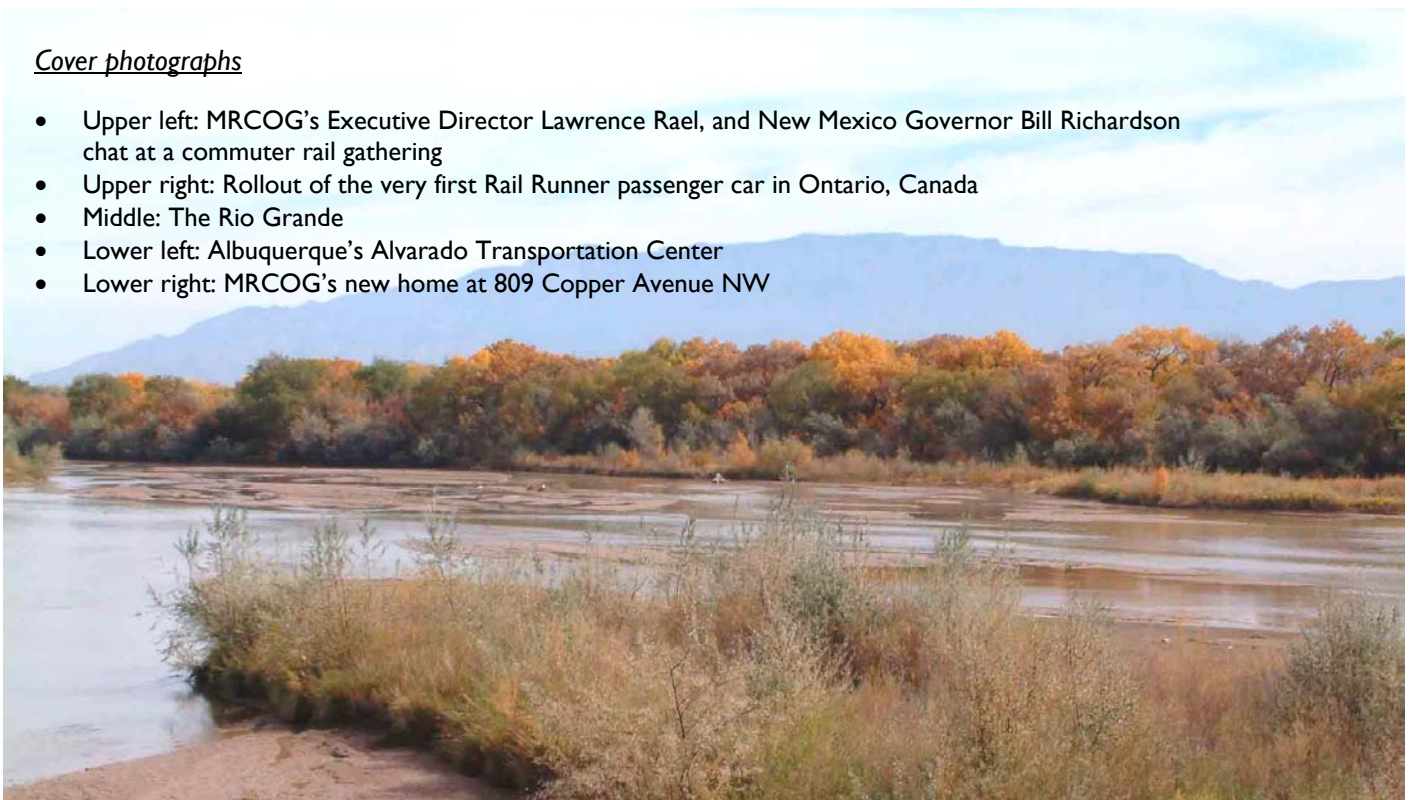
Steven Anaya is the Director of Fannie Mae's New Mexico Partnership Office.

A native New Mexican, Anaya serves on the boards of many organizations whose goal it is to improve New Mexico's economy and quality of life.

He is a city councilor in Moriarty, where he also resides.

Cover photographs

- Upper left: MRCOG's Executive Director Lawrence Rael, and New Mexico Governor Bill Richardson chat at a commuter rail gathering
- Upper right: Rollout of the very first Rail Runner passenger car in Ontario, Canada
- Middle: The Rio Grande
- Lower left: Albuquerque's Alvarado Transportation Center
- Lower right: MRCOG's new home at 809 Copper Avenue NW



A letter from MRCOG's Executive Director

The core mission of the Mid-Region Council of Governments is the development and promotion of a collaborative approach to issues that impact communities in this region. Through that collaboration, we also employ our combined assets whenever possible to make the most of opportunities available to us.

This annual report reflects the progress we've made during the past several months. Clearly, the most visible accomplishment has been the move to our new building at 809 Copper Avenue Northwest, a beautiful facility that accommodates the increase in MRCOG staff and offers ample meeting space for committee meetings and community events. Later this year, our building will also house New Mexico's first regional Intelligent Transportation System, an innovative project being implemented by the New Mexico Department of Transportation.

The location of the ITS is a reflection of our strong partnership with NMDOT. For nearly two years, MRCOG has worked with the NMDOT and our local governments to develop the New Mexico Rail Runner commuter system so that it serves the transportation and economic development needs of this region. I see the Rail Runner as a truly regional undertaking: like a ribbon, the commuter rail line will tie our communities together, combine our assets, and enhance opportunities for all.

The commuter rail service will provide momentum for economic development in this region and allow us to compete in the global marketplace with other regions throughout the world. Eventually, as the rail line extends to Santa Fe, it will play a key role in the creation of a broader economic region encompassing communities from Los Alamos to Socorro. That economic region will offer the assets of our two national laboratories, several colleges and universities, and a wide population base and labor pool, among other things. Those factors, combined with the many other cultural and natural assets of the state, will make New Mexico a world-class contender for economic opportunities.

This year, MRCOG has also focused on workforce development as a key component of regional economic development. As administrative and fiscal agent for the Workforce Connection of Central New Mexico, we have provided leadership in coordinating workforce training programs with the needs of regional employers. We have undertaken the complex task of integrating the region's TANF workforce programs into the existing WIA network to improve access and streamline delivery of services for job seekers and employers.

As reflected in this report, MRCOG continues to grow as our role as a leader on regional issues expands. Each of our programs is a step in our effort to address shared opportunities and problems as a region, not just as individual communities. We will continue to seek out other partnerships that remove barriers to cooperation and enhance opportunities for all residents of this region.



Lawrence Rael

The Mid-Region Council of Governments (MRCOG) is a voluntary association of local governments and special purpose groups.

Municipal and county government agencies in Bernalillo, Valencia, Torrance, and Sandoval Counties, plus Edgewood in Santa Fe County, are members, as well as groups like Albuquerque Public Schools and the Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District.

Elected and appointed representatives of these organizations serve on MRCOG's board of directors and give the organization direction.

Lawrence Rael

Rail Runner on Track

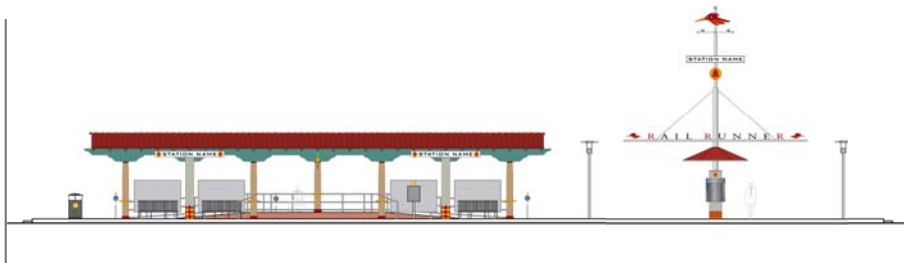
This past year the Mid-Region Council of Governments and the New Mexico Department of Transportation (NMDOT) made big strides toward a late 2005 start up of the Belen to Bernalillo commuter rail train.

Naming, logos and branding for the service were decided on, and the commuter rail service will henceforth be known as the New Mexico Rail Runner Express! The striking name, colors and logo were inspired by the State of New Mexico and its history: the roadrunner symbol and the red and yellow colors of the state flag and the Santa Fe Superchief. The unveiling of the name and logo took place at the new MRCOG offices in March of this year with much public and media enthusiasm.

Rail cars and locomotives are in production in Ontario, Canada, and Boise, Idaho, respectively, and are on schedule to be delivered this fall. The first bi-level (a.k.a. double-decker) coach was completed by Bombardier® in a record eight and a half months.

MRCOG and the Department of Transportation have already hired a contract operator to drive and maintain the trains, collect fares, and perform repairs and upgrades on the track. Herzog Transit Services Inc., contract operator for commuter rail lines in Miami, Dallas, and San Jose, was selected for the job. Federal funds were programmed by the NMDOT this spring to cover the operating cost of the service for the first three years, sending the Rail Runner off to a great start.

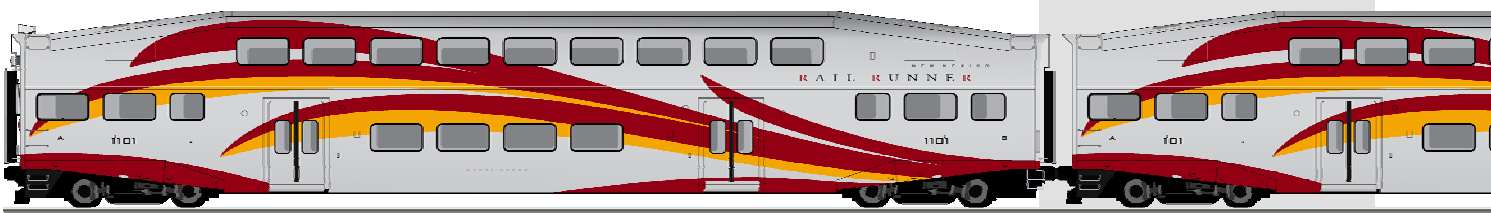
Planning, property acquisition, and design for all eight stations along the line have been completed, and platforms are now ready to be constructed. The conceptual drawing below gives an idea of what the stations will ultimately look like.



The media have shown a tremendous interest in the commuter rail project and are often present at public events. Above: MRCOG executive director Lawrence Rael is interviewed for a newscast of one of our local T.V. stations.



The first Rail Runner passenger car under construction at Bombardier® in Canada



Next Stop Santa Fe?

Work also continued on exploring the possibility of extending Rail Runner service north to Santa Fe. MRCOG and the New Mexico Department of Transportation are in the process of completing the first phase of what is known as the *Alternatives Analysis*. This analysis evaluates a variety of options for better connecting Albuquerque and Santa Fe, including new rail lines and additional roadway lanes.

The next phase of the *Alternatives Analysis* is due to begin this fall, and will involve conducting additional environmental and engineering work on the alternatives that look most promising. Finally, the preferred option will need to be designed and constructed. If chosen as the preferred alternative, the goal is to start commuter rail service by the end of 2008.



Pueblo Stations?

As part of the station development process, MRCOG has been working with the Pueblos of Sandia and Isleta to establishing Rail Runner stations within these Pueblos' boundaries.

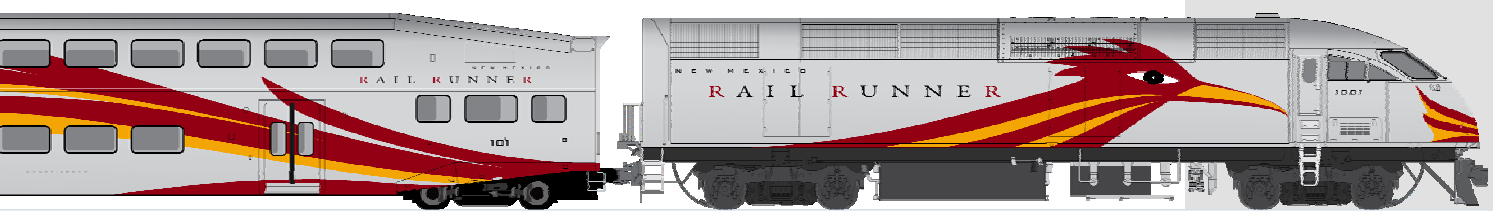
Rapid Ride Connections

In December of 2004, the City of Albuquerque initiated the Rapid Ride bus service which runs along the Central Avenue corridor from Unser Boulevard to Wyoming Boulevard and then north into the Uptown Transit Center by Coronado Mall. This service uses high capacity articulated buses that run about every 15 minutes along the route. They only stop every half mile or so and are equipped with signal pre-emption technology, which allows these buses to travel much faster than regular city buses. Rapid Ride will provide connections from the Downtown Albuquerque Rail Runner station to many of the area's major destinations including the Bio Park, Old Town, West Downtown, Presbyterian Hospital, UNM, Nob Hill, the State Fair Grounds, and Uptown.



TODs

MRCOG has hosted workshops on Transit Oriented Developments (TODs) and is working with communities along the commuter rail line to enhance the economic development potential of land adjacent to the Rail Runner stations.



Metropolitan Mobility

A Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) is a tool for helping people in a metropolitan area determine how their area is growing, which way it is headed, and whether they want it to continue going in that direction. The 2030 MTP will analyze what would happen if current trends were allowed to continue to the year 2030. It will show what would happen if no planning for the future were done, and will then propose alternatives to doing nothing. It outlines specific goals and strategies regarding transportation and offers a set of recommendations aimed at relieving congestion, maintaining air quality, and improving quality of life. These long-term recommendations will guide decisions about specific transportation projects to develop and fund in the short term, as determined by the short-range Transportation Improvement Program.

Development of the 2030 MTP has just begun. An initial round of public outreach efforts kicked off this summer with presentations to civic organizations and neighborhood associations, agency meetings, and open house events. These efforts focused on informing people of the current status of our metropolitan transportation system, identifying future challenges to our quality of life, and refining the draft goals and objectives that were developed for the 2030 MTP last fall.

And it's pretty important: our current long-range plan, the 2025 MTP, set the priorities for over \$3.4 billion in projects and programs! This next MTP will likely see that amount rise even higher.

So far, these important themes have emerged through our public outreach:

- Mobility for commuters, families and visitors through connections and choices: car, bus, train, biking, walking, and horseback
- Transportation services and projects that support community and neighborhood land use visions and goals
- Safety for all travelers for all modes
- Fix it first! Maintain, preserve and rehabilitate the multi-billion dollar investments we've already made
- Manage the roadways better: use Intelligent Transportation Systems to get more out of the existing system before we add more lanes
- Freight connections and commercial access are critical to our region's economic development
- Respect and protect our Land of Enchantment's natural environment

The 2030 MTP will be completed and approved by our Metropolitan Transportation Board in the fall of 2006. Until that time, MRCOG will do its utmost to inform all interested parties of the planning process' progress and to solicit as much public input as possible.

Check www.mrcog-nm.gov for updates on MTP development and upcoming public events.

2030 MTP



2006-2011 TIP Approved

The Mid-Region Council of Governments' Metropolitan Transportation Board approved the Fiscal Year 2006-2011 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) at their regular meeting on April 28, 2005.

Developing a TIP is one of the major functions that MRCOG, in cooperation with local jurisdictions, transit providers, and the New Mexico Department of Transportation, undertakes as the region's Metropolitan Planning Organization. The TIP is a staged, multi-year, intermodal program of transportation projects that will receive federal funds. It is developed every two years and must cover at least a three-year time period. A metropolitan TIP is required by federal law. A region cannot use federal transportation funds without one.

The FY 2006-2011 TIP development process began in October 2004. It will become effective on October 1, 2005 upon approval by the Federal Highway Administration and Federal Transit Administration.

The FY 2006-2011 TIP programs approximately \$518 million for the region's transportation system over a six-year period. It incorporates a wide variety of improvements, including bicycle/pedestrian projects, roadway preservation projects, transit and demand management projects, plans and studies to determine future projects, and projects that will expand the Intelligent Transportation System for the region.

Some representative projects outlined in the program include:

- Funding to operate and maintain the Commuter Rail system
- Continued funding for the Coors/I-40 interchange reconstruction
- Special Appropriations for an interchange at I-25 and Mesa del Sol
- Improvements to the Route 66 Museum and Visitor Center
- Upgrades to the ABQ Ride transit system security equipment
- Rehabilitation and remodeling of transit facilities
- Widening Irving Boulevard from Rio Los Pinos to Unser Boulevard
- Intersection improvements at N.M. 313 and N.M. 556
- Many of the projects funded under the Governor Richardson's Investment Partnership (GRIP) program

MRCOG Technical Support

MRCOG provides planning and technical support to all its member agencies. Recent studies and projects include:

- North 4th Street Corridor Study
- Montano Road Corridor Study
- 2nd Street/Menaul Boulevard Intersection
- Mid-Block Pedestrian/ Bicycle Crossing Study
- Zuni Road Pedestrian Crash Analysis
- Volcano Heights Study
- Edith Boulevard Phase II
- Arenal Corridor Study
- NE Heights Elementary School Accessibility Study
- Zacate Master Plan
- Rio West
- Unser Boulevard
- Scoping and preparatory work for U.S. 550 Corridor Study
- I-25, Tramway to 550
- I-40, San Mateo Interchange Project
- I-40, Carlisle to Pennsylvania
- I-40, Washington Street Overpass Project

Work continues on the reconstruction of the I-40/ Coors Boulevard interchange.



Transit and Trail

The Mid-Region Transit District is Here!

The formation of the Mid-Region Transit District was approved by the New Mexico Transportation Commission during its March 29th meeting in Las Cruces. This approval – the culmination of a year-long process – allows District members to begin organizing the structure of the District.

The first action the 10 members (listed to the right) took was to conduct a workshop in April, facilitated by the Mid-Region Council of Governments, for elected officials and key staff to review in detail the provisions of the District contract.

Each Mid-Region Transit District member will soon be selecting its representative(s) to the District's Board of Directors. Once the Board of Directors is constituted, the District can apply to the New Mexico Department of Transportation for funding for the initial service and finance planning effort. This activity is scheduled to begin this fall.

Member	# of Directors
Albuquerque	5
Bernalillo County	3
City of Rio Rancho	2
Sandoval County	1
Valencia County	1
City of Belen	1
Town of Bernalillo	1
Village of Bosque Farms	1
Village of Los Lunas	1
Los Ranchos de Albuquerque	1
Total	17

United We Ride was initiated by the federal Coordinating Council on Access and Mobility to carry out President Bush's Executive Order on Human Service Transportation (#13330) directing federal departments and agencies to work together to ensure that transportation services are comprehensive, accessible, and seamlessly connected.



In response to the Presidential Executive Order and New Mexico House Bill 412, which calls for a coordinated transportation system pilot project in New Mexico, Governor Richardson created an interagency working group to formulate and implement such a system state-wide. The Departments of Human Services and Transportation are the co-chairs of this working group while MRCOG staff provides technical support. The Department of Transportation has received a Federal Transit Administration grant to support the efforts of this interagency working group.

During this past year, the working group's activities have focused on developing a funding and client transportation tracking form that will eventually be used to benchmark the coordinated system's progress, to tabulate funds, and to frame discussions on how a state-wide system should be structured.

The Florida Department of Transportation, Ohio's Department of Transportation, North Carolina's Department of Health and Human Services, and the North Carolina Department of Transportation all have sent representatives to New Mexico to give presentations on their state's coordinated transportation system. Each of these states has been recognized by the federal government for their outstanding efforts, and they provided invaluable information to New Mexico's working group.

Rio Grande Bosque Trail Extension Project

In January of 2005, Governor Richardson announced plans to create a “world-class trail system” for hikers, bicyclists and equestrians that would stretch along the Rio Grande from Bernalillo to Belen, connecting to the existing 16 miles of paved and informal trails along the river in Bernalillo County, for a total of more than fifty miles of multi-use trails. The 2005 State Legislature appropriated initial funding for planning and developing this regional trail. MRCOG is the implementing agency, working with the Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District and local governments, to develop a blueprint for the overall trail and to build several demonstration projects.



The trail will provide both recreation and transportation opportunities for residents and visitors, so pedestrian, bicycle and equestrian connections to adjacent communities, as well as trailheads and parking accommodations, are key. The trail design may vary as it passes through different communities to reflect the particular character and needs of each.

One of the biggest challenges will be the development of management and funding strategies for this multi-jurisdictional trail. Opportunities for collaboration and potential benefits for adjacent communities are enormous. The extraordinary beauty of the bosque will become more accessible, resulting in increased appreciation of this fragile and essential resource that defines the region.



The pictures above and to the left show possible alignments for the extension of the Bosque Trail system: A levee road north of Belen (above) and a levee road near Bosque Farms (left)

A section of the existing Bosque Trail in Albuquerque



Transportation and Innovation

As the Middle Rio Grande region continues to grow, areas outside of Bernalillo County are beginning to experience the impacts of that growth. Valencia County especially, is feeling its effects. Here, portions of the roadway network have experienced growth rates of up to 200(!) percent since 1994. In recognition of this phenomenon, the New Mexico Department of Transportation has provided funding to MRCOG to develop a long range transportation plan for Valencia County.

The *Valencia County Mobility Plan* aims to identify a regional, comprehensive, coordinated multimodal transportation system that meets the needs of the County's residents and business community. It will contain a prioritized list of transportation projects to be implemented in the County over the next 20 years. The Plan is scheduled to be completed and approved by local governments in late 2005.

In addition to small group discussions, MRCOG staff has been present at events throughout the County to provide information about the Plan and obtain input. These events included the Belen Music Fest, the Los Lunas Chamber of Commerce Art Fest, 4th of July events in Los Lunas and Belen, and the Bosque Farms Fair.

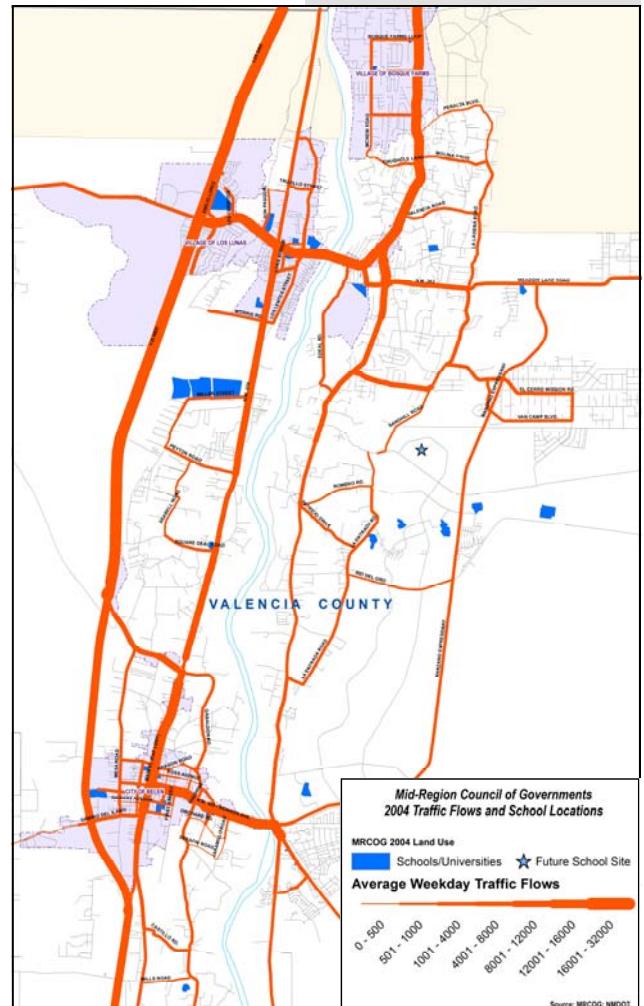
A number of different approaches was proposed to address the question of roadway facilities in the County. These included a "Do Nothing" option, an "Additional Roads and Lanes" alternative that focused on north-to-south roadways, and two east-to-west approaches that included potential additional river crossings, one for 2015 and one for 2025.

Whether the selected Plan alternative will actually be implemented depends on the commitment of local governments, businesses, neighborhoods, equestrian and bicycling groups, and members of the general public to work together in order to find the resources and agree on the details necessary for completing specific projects.



MRCOG staff gets feedback from Valencia County residents at a local event.

Valencia County Plans Transportation Future



The map above gives an indication of the current traffic volumes in Valencia County (the thicker the line, the heavier the traffic).

For more detailed traffic and other statistics about Valencia County, check out MRCOG's website at www.mrcog-nm.gov.

Intelligent Transportation Center

In June of this year, the New Mexico Department of Transportation announced its plan to establish an Intelligent Transportation Center (ITC) on the lower level of the new MRCOG offices in Downtown Albuquerque to provide a central point of coordination for the region's various Intelligent Transportation System (ITS) initiatives. ITS is the use of technology to manage and maximize traffic flow on the roadway network in order to achieve more consistent travel times and less traffic delay.

The purpose of the ITC is to provide a regional center for the collection and evaluation of traffic-related data, and to provide a coordinated regional response to problems like congestion, crashes, poor weather conditions and special events. Ultimately, the center will house traffic experts from various agencies like the Department of Transportation, the City of Albuquerque, Bernalillo County and the City of Rio Rancho.

ITC staff will be able to access information from roadway sensors, cameras, and traffic signals, and will use variable message signs, the internet, and road advisory telephone and radio to inform drivers and other roadway users of traffic problems and roadway conditions. Center operators will also be able to initiate corrective actions by coordinating with police, ambulance, traffic signal operators, and wrecker services. A portion of the center will be used to track commuter rail trains as well.

*Conceptual image
of an Intelligent
Transportation Center*



Transportation Planning in Non-Metro Areas

MRCOG's Regional Planning Organization (RPO) provides transportation planning services and technical assistance to communities outside the Albuquerque metropolitan transportation planning area. The RPO's activities are conducted through the Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC), which was established by the MRCOG Board of Directors. On a continuing basis, the RPO assesses the transportation needs and priorities of the planning region and submits project proposals for the state-wide Transportation Improvement Program.

During the past year, the RPO-TAC was involved in developing federal and state funded projects for Valencia County and for the municipalities of Belen, Cuba, Jemez Springs, San Ysidro, Edgewood, Moriarty, and Mountainair, and in the Pueblos of Santo Domingo, Jemez, and Zia. The RPO also reviewed and evaluated applications for public transit projects, as well as proposed improvements to the Scenic and Historic Byways that traverse the region. The RPO often serves as liaison between local communities and various state and federal agencies, and works directly with district engineers for NMDOT Districts Three, Five, and Six. Three RPO subcommittees were active during the past year: the Valencia County Transportation Subcommittee, the Jemez Valley Corridor Subcommittee, and the Bikeways and Trails Subcommittee.

*N.M. 217 in
eastern Bernalillo County*



Programs for People

MRCOG is the administrative and fiscal entity for the Workforce Connection of Central New Mexico (WCCNM), which serves the counties of Bernalillo, Sandoval, Valencia and Tarrant. WCCNM strives to increase employment opportunities in formerly underserved areas of the region, and to accomplish the goals set forth in the Workforce Investment Act. The most important aspect of the Act is its focus on meeting the needs of businesses for skilled workers and the training, education, and employment needs of individuals. Customers can easily access the information and services they need through the "One-Stop" system where information about and access to a wide array of job training, education, and employment services is available for customers at a single neighborhood location. WCCNM manages these facilities in the four-county area.

As program-year 2004 has drawn to a close, and program-year 2005 is in full swing, WCCNM is proud to report an increased number of enrollments in Occupational Skills training, and the generation of Customized Training and On the Job Training (OJT) contracts. OJT contracts enable businesses to hire workforce participants by providing training opportunities. In return, businesses receive financial support from the WCCNM, as well as employees with skills tailored to meet their needs.

WCCNM has contracted with the Economic Development Departments of each of the four counties in an effort to assess business needs. This effort will connect employers and their needs to the services offered by the One-Stop Centers.

Also worth mentioning are WCCNM's Summer Work Academy and Out of School Youth programs. The Summer Work Academy program, managed by WCCNM for a second year, is administered by local municipal agencies. This program provides low income, at risk teens (14 to 21 years of age) with work readiness skills and summer employment opportunities.

WCCNM's Out of School Youth program provides participants the opportunity to earn a GED and to learn about civic and community-based services.



WORKFORCE CONNECTION
of Central New Mexico

WCCNM's One-Stop Locations

Bernalillo County

501 Mountain Road, NE
Albuquerque

Sandoval County

2418 Southern Blvd. Ste. E
Rio Rancho

Tarrant County

Moriarty Chamber
of Commerce
777 Old US Route 66
Moriarty

Valencia County

UNM Valencia Campus
280 La Entrada
Los Lunas



Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)

On July 1, 2004, WCCNM entered into an intergovernmental agreement with New Mexico Governor's Office of Workforce Training and Development. This agreement established WCCNM as the administrative entity responsible for overseeing portions of the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Works Program: a comprehensive, federal program that provides employment and training, food stamps, cash assistance, and additional supportive services to aid families and help them achieve economic self-sufficiency.

The agreement will be in effect from July 1, 2005 through June 30, 2006, and will be extended, for an additional year, contingent upon the availability of state and/or federal funds. WCCNM has subcontracted with the New Mexico Department of labor to provide WIA and TANF services at the local level.

Additionally, the program provides services such as screening and assessments, comprehensive case management, employment and training activities, job development, identifying and linking participants to available support services, tracking and reporting activities, and employment retention.

Eligible to receive the services available under TANF are one or two parent families with children under the age of 18 that are deprived of financial support from a parent by reason of death, absence from the home, unemployment, or physical or mental incapacity.

TANF service facilities are currently located in Rio Rancho, Los Lunas, Moriarty, and Albuquerque.

WIA and TANF have similar goals, and there are plans to integrate both programs in order to conserve resources and provide seamless, comprehensive services to people in need.

WCCNM Board Members

Charles Aguilar
Yoshiro Akutagawa
Steve Anaya
Jeff Armijo, Chair-Elect
Claudette Baca
Lloyd Beebe
Martha Binford
Carol Biondi
Doug Calderwood
Ken Carson
Robert Davey, Treasurer
Chuck Gara
Vince Garcia
Stephanie Hanosh
Joe Iorg
Judy LeJeune
Connie Leyva
Patricia Lincoln
Rita Logan
Edna Lopez
JC Lopez
Roger Madalena
Louis Maldonado
Gwen Manfre
Mary Lee Martin
Kathy McCormick
Virginia Murphy
Al Padilla
Jeff Parker
Norman Ration
Randy Sanchez
John Sapien, Chair
Ben Silva
Jim Summers
Mike Swisher
Dave Tixier
John Walstrom
Marsha Webb



Regional Planning

The four-county MRCOG region is comprised of many diverse communities, ranging in size from metropolitan Albuquerque with a population of a half million to rural towns and villages with less than 1,000 residents. Small or rural communities do not always have the resources to support a full-time planning program, and they sometimes lack the technical expertise for specialized planning and project development. MRCOG maintains a multi-disciplined staff of professional planners, statisticians, and program managers, who provide planning and technical assistance to local communities upon request.

In the past year, MRCOG has provided supplemental staff support for:

- Developing comprehensive plans for the municipalities of Mountainair and Cuba, and for Valencia County.
- Conducting planning research and drafting regulations, ordinances, and maps for land use management for numerous municipalities.
- Assisting with the Heart of Belen project to redevelop Belen's Downtown area
- Conducting Planning Commission Workshops in Bosque Farms, Moriarty and Estancia.
- Providing special assistance to the Pueblos of Santo Domingo, Jemez, and Zia

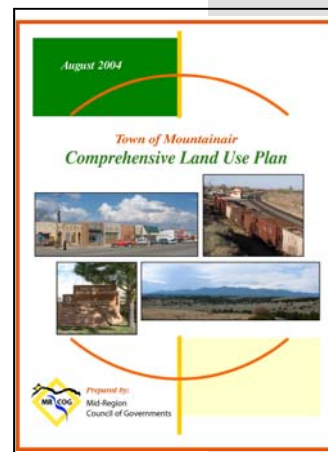
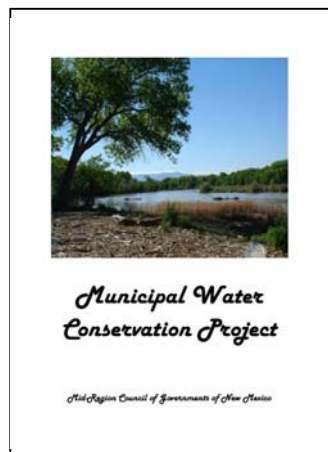
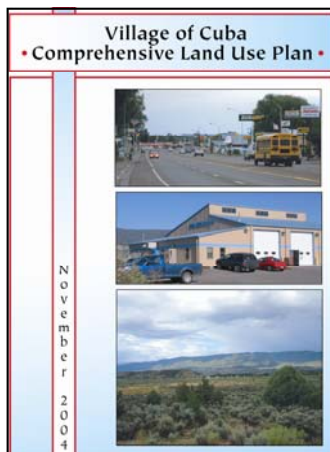
A common element to all of these planning activities was the continued improvement of a regional information database with socioeconomic, transportation, water, and land use data. In many cases, this information was supplemented with orthophotos and parcel-based mapping.

MRCOG staff also conducted or assisted in special water-related projects, including the Municipal Water Conservation Project to develop conservation plans for municipalities in Valencia County, and the Estancia Basin Resource Association efforts to protect local water from exportation.

Local Government Planning Assistance



*Beautiful Estancia
in Torrance County*



Economic Development Planning

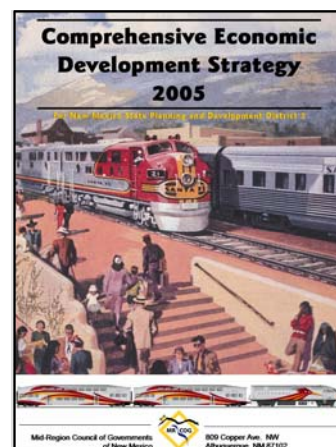
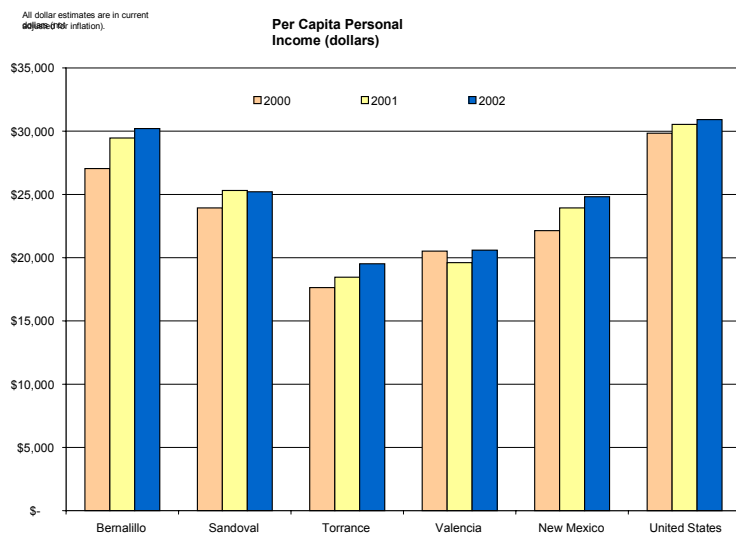
A major achievement this past year was the completion of the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS), which provides a regional overview of economic conditions in the four-county MRCOG area, and lists objectives for improving the region's economy. The CEDS was developed with wide-spread input from the community, including economic development specialists, business leaders, and elected officials. With federal funding from the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA), the CEDS is updated and published every five years.

The principal objectives of the 2005 CEDS are:

- To strengthen the economic base of local communities
- To increase the quality of life
- To support the retention and growth of jobs within the region

The seven focus areas are (1) agriculture and environment (including alternative energy); (2) aviation and space exploration; (3) entrepreneurship and access to capital; (4) film and artisan manufacturing; (5) infrastructure and multimodal transportation improvements; (6) technology and biosciences; and (7) workforce and education investments.

Over the past year, EDA grants totaling \$2.85 million were awarded within the MRCOG Economic Development District: \$1 million to the Lovelace Respiratory Research Institute to upgrade its facilities to be more competitive in pharmaceutical and biomedical research; \$1.3 million to the University of New Mexico Manufacturing Training and Technology Center for a "cleanroom" project; \$250 thousand to the Hispano Chamber of Commerce to support its web-based program called eMercadoNM; and \$300 thousand to the WESSTCorps, an economic development organization, to build a business incubator in Downtown Albuquerque. Projects included in a region's economic development strategy have a better chance of receiving EDA grant funding.



Kirtland Partnership

MRCOG became a member of the Kirtland Partnership Committee, and joins local elected officials, community and business leaders in supporting the Kirtland Air Force Base and recognizing the important role the Base plays in this region's economy.



The table to the left shows per capita personal income levels in 2000, 2001, 2002, for the counties of Bernalillo, Sandoval, Torrance, and Valencia as well as for the state of New Mexico and the United States.

Find these and other interesting statistics in CEDS 2005.

Water Planning

Water Resource Programs

After seven years of intensive work, the *Middle Rio Grande Regional Water Plan* was completed, reviewed, and accepted by virtually all of the local governments in the three-county water planning area, which includes the Rio Puerco and Rio Jemez watersheds of the Rio Grande basin. On August 17, 2004, the New Mexico Interstate Stream Commission accepted the Plan as well. The Middle Rio Grande Regional Water Plan was developed to foster coordinated and cooperative water management in a time when most communities are facing growing concerns about depleting their long-term water supply.

Under the direction of the Middle Rio Grande Water Resources Board, implementation of the Plan's recommendations has begun. The current emphasis is on local water conservation programs, coordination and collaboration of water supply providers, and reduction of the loss of water through evapotranspiration in forested areas. The role of the Water Resources Board is being adjusted to serve more regional interests and strengthen intergovernmental coordination in water management.

*Middle Rio Grande
irrigation canal*



Rio Grande Bosque Restoration Project



The Rio Grande flows through a densely-wooded (Bosque) flood plain that has been confined for decades by flood control levees. Unfortunately, non-native vegetation has invaded the natural Bosque, resulting in significant water loss due to evapotranspiration from these non-native plants. By eliminating this high water use vegetation, water will be available for other uses in the Rio Grande watershed.

Working with the New Mexico Office of Natural Resources Trustee, the Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District, and the Ciudad Soil and Water Conservation District, MRCOG is conducting a program to remove non-native, high water use vegetation along the banks of the Rio Grande and to revegetate those areas with low water consumption native plants. This program has already completed restoration work on 424 acres in the Rio Grande valley. Benefits of combined resources are maximized by coordinating with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the City of Albuquerque Open Space Division, the New Mexico State Parks Division, and the National Hispanic Cultural Center, who all conduct similar programs.

Restoration Project Areas

National Hispanic Cultural Center

14 acres were retreated
and revegetated

Rio Grande Nature Center

10 acres were revegetated
and underwent fuels
reduction treatment

Bridge Boulevard to I-25

80 acres of Bosque
were treated

Alameda Boulevard to Bridge Boulevard

320 acres of Bosque
were retreated

Agribusiness

For many years, MRCOG has supported the role of agriculture in the local economy. Through its Agribusiness Task Force, MRCOG seeks to raise public awareness about the benefits of locally grown products and the sustainability of agriculture. In response to the diminishing farmland acreage in the MRCOG region, the Agribusiness Task Force is involved in numerous activities to stimulate agricultural enterprise in this region and to preserve lands for future agricultural uses. Recently, a new agribusiness web page has been activated as part of MRCOG's website. It offers a wide range of information developed by the Agribusiness Task Force. Please visit this website at www.agbz.net or through www.mrcog-nm.gov.



National and Local Farmland Findings

- The U.S. loses over one million acres of farmland every year
- The rate of loss of farm and ranch land was 51 percent higher in the 1990s than the 1980s
- More than 86 percent of America's fruits and vegetables, and 63 percent of our dairy products are produced in urban-influenced agricultural areas
- Between 1982 and 1997, the U.S. population grew by 17 percent, while the area of urbanized land increased by 47 percent



Tagawa Greenhouse in Torrance County. Tagawa supplies flowers to local, regional, and national markets.

	Bernalillo County	Sandoval County	Torrance County	Valencia County
Number of farms (2002 Census)	618	347	461	718
% change from 1997	-9%	-25%	-26%	-14%
Total market value of agricultural products (2002 Census)	\$20,025,000	\$5,641,000	\$36,000,000	\$17,715,000
% change from 1997	-37%	-47%		-36%
% farmers for whom agriculture is primary occupation	50%	50%	62%	50%



Growers' Market in Albuquerque's Robinson Park, with the new MRCOG building in the background.

MRCOG Finds Permanent Home

In March of 2005, MRCOG moved into its new home at 809 Copper Avenue in Downtown Albuquerque. The County of Bernalillo purchased the office building in August 2004 for \$1.65 million from Compass Bank. The County funded the purchase with a \$2.0 million county bond sale with the remaining funds available for renovation expenses. MRCOG entered into a long-term lease/purchase agreement with Bernalillo County and for the first time in its history, MRCOG is investing rather than renting.

After six months of design and renovation, the building was transformed into an office facility that both maintains the historic architecture and charm of the original building, and provides the facilities needed to meet MRCOG's current mission and growth needs. The building has approximately 31,000 square feet and is much, much larger than the office building on Commercial Avenue MRCOG occupied before.

MRCOG has invested close to \$900,000 on renovating and upgrading the facility in order to meet current building code requirements. This included upgrades to the heating and air conditioning systems and electrical systems, and installing an elevator in order to meet ADA requirements. MRCOG has been fortunate to receive funding from Bernalillo County and the State Legislature Capital Outlay program to fund most of these renovations. The current value of the office building is already much higher than what was spent to purchase the facility, making this a great investment for MRCOG.

If you haven't already, come visit us and tour our new home at 809 Copper Avenue NW in Downtown Albuquerque!



The original main house, built in 1907



The east side of the building: a later addition



New quarters for MRCOG's professional staff



Word of MRCOG's new facilities spread fast; especially our new large board room is proving to be a hot commodity.

*Above left: grantwriting workshop with state-wide participation
Bottom left: GRIP 2 presentation by the NMDOT*

Mid-Region Council of Governments' Board of Directors

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Tina Cummins, Councilor
Eric Griego, Councilor
Martin Heinrich, Councilor
Brad Winter, Councilor
*James Lewis, Chief
Administrative Officer

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*Robert Lucero, Board Member

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*M. Steven Anaya, Councilor,
Chair, MRCOG Board of Directors

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Jessie Davidson, P&Z Commission

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Rio Rancho Public Schools

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Jack Thomas, Commissioner

Southern Sandoval County Arroyo Flood Control Authority (SSCAFCA)

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Zoning Board Member

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Dave Abrams
Demographer

Lloyd Aragon
Planner, WCCNM

Sheila Bailon
Clerk

Chris Blewett
Director of Transportation and
Planning Services

Janice M. Borchardt
Accounting Manager, WCCNM

Sheila ter Bruggen
Transportation Planner

Janice Carolan
Special Project Accountant

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Director of Planning and General
Services

Ramona Chavez
Manager, WCCNM

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GIS/Systems Analyst

Carol Earp
GIS Analyst/Cartographer

Randall Falkner
Regional Planner

Carol L. Foster
Research Analyst

Ted Gaudette
Information Systems Administrator

Cynthia Green
Traffic Counting Technician

Amelia Handrich
Traffic Counting Aide

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Barbara Thomas
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Loretta M. Tollefson
Special Projects Manager

Josi Vigil
Accountant

Wendy Vigil
Human Resources, Office Manager

Kendra Watkins
Social Demographer



MRCOG and NMDOT staff get down and dirty during a recent Mud Volleyball Tournament to benefit the Carrie Tingley Hospital Foundation.